



Press Release

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge
3860 Tollgate Blvd, Suite 300 Naples, FL 34114

FOR IMMEDIATE Release

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Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge seeks public input on Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to revise its comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located in Collier County, Florida. On **July 16th 2014**, between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM, Refuge staff will be hosting an open house meeting to seek public comments and understand the range of interest in the refuge's management. "The open house meeting will allow refuge staff a chance to listen to members of the public about topics that they would like us to address in the next comprehensive plan," said Kevin Godsea, Project Leader Florida Panther NWR.

If you are interested in management of the refuge but unable to attend the open house, you are invited to engage in the conversation via an online public engagement platform at: <http://www.floridapantherplan.com> or you may also send comments, questions, and requests for information to: Florida Panther CCP, 3860 Tollgate blvd. Suite 300, Naples, FL 34114; or email us at FloridaPantherCCP@fws.gov.

Background

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The original CCP for Florida Panther NWR was completed in 2000. Since much has changed in the intervening time, the Service has determined that the CCP for Florida Panther NWR needs to be revised. The purpose for revising the CCP is to provide refuge managers with an updated 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The CCP will be consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Each unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System was established for specific purposes. We use these purposes as the foundation for developing and prioritizing the management goals and objectives for each refuge within the National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and to determine

how the public can use each refuge. The planning process is a way for us and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation approach to this important wildlife habitat, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with the refuge's establishing purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Purposes of Florida Panther NWR

Established in 1989 and encompassing 26,605 acres, Florida Panther NWR's purposes are: to conserve fish, wildlife, and plants which are listed as threatened or endangered species (Endangered Species Act of 1973) and for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956). Two key Service documents played a strong role in defining the purposes of Florida Panther NWR, which prioritize the protection and recovery of the Florida panther: (1) the 1985 Fakahatchee Strand Environmental Assessment, which clearly states that the refuge area should be acquired for the benefit and recovery of the endangered Florida panther and (2) the 1995 and subsequent 2008 revision of the Florida Panther Recovery Plan, which states that the refuge is essential to the survival of the Florida panther and that the refuge should enhance habitat conditions for the panther and its prey species.

Meeting Specifics

July 16th 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Comfort Inn and Suites 2nd floor Conference Room

3860 Tollgate Blvd

Naples, FL 34114

This public scooping meeting is an open house agenda, where members of the public can come any time between 5:00PM and 8:00PM to speak with managers and biologist about their ideas for future refuge management.

Additional Resources:

To better understand the current management goals and objectives, please visit the refuge's website: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Florida_Panther/.

To read or download a copy of the existing CCP visit:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Florida_Panther/what_we_do/ccp.html

Engage in the discussion happening now at:

<http://www.floridapantherplan.com>

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